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Borough of Bury St. Edmunds



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

1950.

BURY ST. EDMUNDS :

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TO THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND
COUNCILLORS OF THE BOROUGH
OF BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

MR. MAYOR, MRS. BATES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present the Annual Report of the Public Health Service for the year, 1950.

Suitable housing accommodation, a plentiful and wholesome water supply, clean food and satisfactory sewage disposal, are the very foundations upon which the public health is supported.

In the substance of this report the progress made in the housing programme in the five post war years is reviewed. Mention is made of the extensive improvements to the water supply which are in hand. The introduction of new "Clean Food" Byelaws is reported, and attention is drawn to the urgent need for an improved sewage disposal system.

I wish to express my thanks to Mr. Eldred, your Sanitary Inspector, for his help at all times and in the compilation of this report. By himself he has shouldered the burden of increasing responsibilities for many years. This fact has been recognised by the Ministry of Health granting permission to advertise for the appointment of an Additional Sanitary Inspector.

In conclusion, I wish to record my appreciation of the assistance and encouragement which I have received from the Chairman and Members of the Public Health Committee.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

P. COGGIN BROWN,

Medical Officer of Health.

STAFF.

During the year the Ministry of Health granted permission to advertise for the appointment of an Additional Sanitary Inspector. A very good response was received to this advertisement, there being more than fifty applications for the post. Selected candidates were interviewed by the Sub-Committee and Mr. E. H. Box of the County Borough of West Ham was appointed. Mr. Box took up the new appointment on 1st January, 1951.

VITAL STATISTICS.

ALL FIGURES IN BRACKETS which follow in the sequence of this report relate to the corresponding figures for 1949.

POPULATION.—Registrar General's Estimate for 1950	....	20,000
" " " 1949	....	18,870
Census 1931 .... .... .... .... ....	....	16,708

BIRTHS.—There was a decline in the birth rate for England and Wales in the year 1950. There was a similar decline in the birth rate for Bury St. Edmunds. The figure for Bury St. Edmunds, when corrected for comparability, remained slightly above that for England and Wales as a whole. The number of stillbirths increased from 6 to 8 and the illegitimate births from 12 to 14.

LIVE BIRTHS.	Total.	Male.	Female.
Legitimate	301 (305)	162 (172)	139 (133)
Illegitimate	14 (12)	9 (7)	5 (5)
Birth Rate per 1,000 of Population	15.75	(16.79)	
,, ,, ,, England and Wales	15.8	(16.7)	
,, ,, corrected for comparability	16.1		

STILLBIRTHS.	Total.	Male.	Female.
Legitimate	8 (6)	2 (3)	6 (3)
Illegitimate	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Rate per 1,000 of Population ....	....	.4 (.31)	
" " "	England and Wales	.37 (.39)	
" " "	Total (live and still) births	24.7	(18.5)

CORRECTION.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Since this report was printed the Registrar General has found it necessary to issue revised comparability factors for the year, 1950.

Revised comparability factor for births	....	....	....	1.05
,, ,, ,, ,, deaths	....	....	....	0.93

The final figures for the corrected birth and death rates, using these revised factors, are shown below.

Birth rate corrected for comparability	16.5
Death ,, ,, ,, ,,	10.6



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DEATHS.—There was a slight increase in the total number of deaths in this Borough, in spite of which there was a fall in the crude death rate. This anomaly was due to the increase in the Registrar General's Estimate of the population for 1950 over that for 1949. The death rate of Bury St. Edmunds corrected for the age and sex distribution of the population, remained appreciably below that for England and Wales.

DEATHS.	Total.	Male.	Female.
	228 (222)	119 (100)	109 (122)
Crude Death rate per 1,000 Population	....	....	11.4 (11.7)
,, ,, corrected for comparability	....	....	10.7 (10.6)
,, ,, per 1,000 of Population			
	England and Wales		11.6 (11.7)

MATERNAL MORTALITY.—After a period of four years with no death from maternal causes, one maternal death occurred in 1950.

Deaths from Puerperal Sepsis....	....	....	....	0	(0)
,, ,, other maternal causes	....	....	....	1	(0)

THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE is commonly regarded as one of the most accurate indications of the state of the public health. But considerable variations in this rate are likely to occur from year to year, because the figure is based upon a relatively small population. By calculating the average rate over five year periods the effect of the yearly fluctuations can be reduced, and it is interesting to note that the average infant mortality rate for Bury St. Edmunds calculated in this way has been consistently below that for England and Wales throughout the last fifty years.

Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age.—

	Total.	Male.	Female.
Legitimate	4 (8)	4 (5)	0 (3)
Illegitimate	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (1)
Rate per 1,000 live births	....	....	12.6 (28)
,, ,, ,, England and Wales			29.8 (32)

In 1950 the total number of deaths of infants was 4. All occurred in the first month of life and the causes were as follows :—

Congenital Malformation	....	....	....	....	....	1
Prematurity ....	....	....	....	....	....	2
All other causes ....	....	....	....	....	....	1

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

SEWAGE.—The disposal of sewage from this Borough is very unsatisfactory. The Sewage Farm at West Stow is quite inadequate to treat the volume of sewage which is delivered to it. The land at the farm is sewage sick having been overdosed for many years. There has been some difficulty with the main outfall sewer near the point where it crosses the river Lark at Chimney Mills. The sewer at this point becomes surcharged on occasions, particularly after heavy rainfall and when the siphon chambers are being cleaned. On one occasion during the year a considerable discharge of crude sewage occurred at this point, which resulted in the fouling of a nearby ditch. Active steps were taken to minimise the danger and to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence of this trouble.

Public interest is being aroused in the subject of River Pollution and new legislation for the prevention of pollution is in the course of preparation. The sewage farm at West Stow is quite incapable of producing an effluent of a desirable standard.

The Council has long recognised the inadequacy of the arrangements for sewage disposal and Consultant Engineers have been instructed to prepare plans for an up to date and effective system. These plans were not received during the year 1950, but, at the time of writing, plans for a modern sewage works, to be erected on a site at Pigeon Lane, Fornham All Saints' in the Thingoe Rural District, have been received and approved by the Council.

The approval of the Ministry of Local Government and Planning and other interested parties is now awaited. It is to be hoped that the necessary permission will be received in the near future in order that this very urgent work may be started with the least possible delay.

The following is the report of the Borough Surveyor and Water Engineer.

WATER—GENERAL.

The water supply has been satisfactory throughout the year, and an adequate supply has been maintained. Throughout the period fortnightly samples of water drawn from the wells have maintained a very high standard of bacteriological purity, and additional analyses have also proved satisfactory.

Every week four samples of water have been taken from the distribution system and submitted to the Public Health Laboratories, Ipswich. Despite main-laying work carried out during the year there has been no serious falling off in quality, and this particular service provides a constant vigilance over the purity of the water.

WATERWORKS IMPROVEMENT SCHEME.

During the year considerable progress has been made with the Waterworks Improvement Scheme, and a total length of 3,770 yards of feeder mains have been laid having diameters of from 5 inches to 8 inches. Other small lengths of main have been renewed and a 4 inch main has been taken to the boundary with the Thingoe R.D.C. at the River Lark bridge on the Thetford Road in order to provide facilities for a supply to the Barton Hill district in the area of that Authority.

PUMPING STATION—KING'S ROAD GROUND.

During the year a start has been made on the reconstruction of the King's Road Pumping Station. This scheme will take some considerable time to complete, due to the difficulty in effecting any changeover of system until the works in other parts of the town are more advanced.

WATER TOWER.

The Contractors for the construction of the Water Tower arrived on the site the last week of the year, and were making preparations for a start at the beginning of 1951.

REFUSE COLLECTIONS.

In view of the recent growth of the town, and the increased volume of refuse it has been found necessary to substitute horse transport by mechanical means, and in October an additional 10 cubic yard Shelvoke and Drewry Refuse Freighter was purchased. It is anticipated that a further freighter will be bought during the coming year, making a total of three 10 cubic yard freighters and one 7 cubic yard second-hand standby vehicle. It will then be possible to dispose of all horse transport for refuse collection purposes.

REFUSE DISPOSAL.

The majority of the town's domestic refuse is burned at the refuse destructor adjoining the Playfield, the resultant clinker being used chiefly for making up low-lying lands, particularly the Haberden.

The volume of refuse at times exceeds the capacity of the destructor, and it then becomes necessary to resort to controlled tipping. The main difficulty in this direction is the very limited area of land suitable for this purpose, in or near the Borough, as so much of this lies immediately on the chalk outcrop.

SEWERAGE.

No new soil sewers were laid during the year, but it is hoped to commence work on the North Western Drainage Scheme early in the New Year.

SWIMMING BATH.

A second-hand filtration plant and chlorinator has been purchased, and will be in operation for the 1951 swimming season.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Two slaughterhouses have remained in use for the slaughter of animals for Bury St. Edmunds and the surrounding districts.

CARCASES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED.

	Cattle, excluding Cows.	Cows.	Calves.	Sheep and Lambs.	Pigs.
Number killed (if known)	1753	424	1160	3384	636
Number inspected	1753	424	1160	3384	636
ALL DISEASES EXCEPT TUBERCULOSIS.					
Whole carcasses condemned	18	13	5	22	31
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	354	107	4	148	111
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis	20.6%	28.3%	.77%	5.0%	22.3%
TUBERCULOSIS ONLY.					
Whole carcasses condemned	10	11	—	—	1
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	111	87	—	—	6
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	6.8%	23.1%	—	—	1.1%

Cysticercus Bovis was found in 6 cattle (1 cow and 5 others).

UNSOND FOOD.—Foodstuffs found to be unfit for human consumption and diverted to other purposes or destroyed were :—

Meat and Offals	24 tons	1 cwt.	3 qrs.
Miscellaneous Articles.	1 ton.	3 cwts.	2 qrs.

In addition 1419 tins of meat, fish, milk, vegetables, etc., were destroyed and 712 certificates of condemnation issued.

MILK.—The inspection of Dairies has been maintained. Four licences to bottle T.T. milk were issued.

FOOD POISONING OUTBREAKS.—The table referred to in Ministry of Health Circular 2/50 of 25th January, 1950, is not reproduced as no case of food poisoning was notified.

CLEAN FOOD.—New Byelaws for securing the observance of “Sanitary and cleanly conditions and practices in connection with the Handling, Wrapping and Delivery of Food and Sale of Food in the open air” were brought into operation in this Borough in November.

It is earnestly hoped that the full co-operation of all food handlers will be obtained, and that strict observance of these Bye-laws will result in a permanent improvement in our standards of food hygiene.

RATS AND MICE DESTRUCTION ACT, 1919.

The work of the Department in administering this Act, has been continued throughout the year.

Details of inspections and treatments are as follows :—

Business Premises—Inspections	210
Treatments	26
Private Dwellings—Inspections	964
Treatments	95

In addition to the above one maintenance treatment was carried out to the sewerage system of the Town, and periodic inspections and treatments at the sewage farm, refuse destructor and refuse tips. A quarterly inspection, and treatment where necessary, is also made of all allotments under the control of the Council and several visits and treatments were carried out at the Hardwick Camp Hutments.

In all cases the methods laid down by the Ministry have been followed which, in the case of every treatment, involves at least six visits, four days for pre-baiting, one day poisoning and the sixth for removing any unconsumed poison bait. In cases of heavy infestation, further visits for post-baiting are made to ascertain if a complete clearance has been effected.

FACTORIES ACT, 1937.

1.—INSPECTIONS for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors).

Premises.	Number on Register.	Number of		
		Inspections	Written notices.	Occupiers prosecuted.
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	66	73		
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	106	16		
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises)				
Total	172	89		

2.—Cases in which DEFECTS were found.

Particulars.	Number of cases in which defects were found			Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted.
	Found.	Remedied	Referred To H.M. Inspector.	
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	2	2		
Overcrowding (S.2)				
Unreasonable temperature (S.3)				
Inadequate Ventilation (S.4)				
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6)				
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)				
(a) Insufficient	1	1		
(b) Unsuitable or defective	1	1		
(c) Not separate for sexes				1
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork)				
TOTAL	4	4		1

OUTWORK.

(Sections 110 and 111).

Nature of Work.	Section 110.			Section 111.	
	No. of out-workers in August list required by Sect. 110 (1) (c)	No. of cases of default in sending lists to the Council.	No. of prosecutions for failure to supply lists	No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises.	Notices served.
Wearing apparel Making, etc.	3				

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The total number of notifications received in the year was 332. There was a widespread epidemic of Measles, 284 cases being reported in the Borough. This was rather more than occurred in the epidemic of 1947. In spite of the large number of cases there was no death from Measles.

There were more notifications of Scarlet Fever and of Whooping Cough than in the previous year, but no deaths occurred from these diseases.

There were two confirmed cases of Poliomyelitis. One was non-paralytic and recovery was complete. Extensive enquiries were made but the probable source of infection was not discovered. The other case was not notified. The diagnosis was made after a postmortem examination, death having occurred at a Hospital outside the County.

TUBERCULOSIS.—There were 5 deaths from Tuberculosis. The number of new cases reported increased from 16 in the previous year to 21 in the year under review. The average number of new cases reported per year in the last ten years was 18, but the 1950 figure of 21 was exceeded on two occasions in this period.

TUBERCULOSIS.

NEW CASES.

DEATHS.

POST WAR HOUSING PROGRAMME.

In this Borough a great effort has been made to cope with the post war housing problem, and much has been done in the five years which have passed since the war. In spite of this the results so far achieved represent but a small fraction of the need, and many families are still living under conditions which are undesirable.

BUILDING BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SINCE THE WAR.

Between the end of the war and 31st December, 1950 the Council has provided 480 units of living accommodation. This total is made up as follows :—

New houses	....	....	....	....	....	354
Prefabricated bungalows	....	....	....	....	....	65
Nissen type huts	....	....	....	....	....	57
Maisonettes	....	....	....	....	....	4

There remain in addition 23 properties providing accommodation for a total of 31 families, which were requisitioned during and since the war.

BUILDING BY PRIVATE ENTERPRISE SINCE THE WAR.

During this five year period 82 new houses and bungalows have been built by private enterprise and approximately 30 additional units of living accommodation have been provided by alteration of existing buildings.

ACCOMMODATION PROVIDED IN THE YEAR, 1950.

LOCAL AUTHORITY.

		Completed in 1950.	Under construct- ion on 31st Dec- ember, 1950.
New houses	....	98	42
Flats	....	0	48
Maisonettes	....	4	16

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

Completed in 1950. Under Construction on 31st December, 1950.

New houses and bungalows	12	15
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On 31st December, 1950 there were still approximately one thousand names on the Council's housing list.

The late Dr. E. Stork, Medical Officer of Health of this Borough wrote in his Annual Report for the year, 1927, "Why after ten years since the Peace Treaty was signed are we still clamouring for more houses?" Although only five years have elapsed since the end of the second world war the "clamour" is louder than ever, and it seems probable that it will still be heard after another five years.

RENTS.—Although there has been no difficulty whatever in finding tenants for the Council's new houses, a proportion of the applicants on the waiting list have declared that they are unable to afford the rent required for these houses. There has been considerable difficulty in finding suitable accommodation for these people at rents which they are prepared to pay. In this way a demand has been created for the Council's older houses which let at lower rentals. But vacancies in these houses are few and far between, because many of the existing tenants prefer to occupy an older house with fewer amenities, than a new house at a higher rent. This problem is not a new one, in the Annual Report for 1919 Dr. Stork referred to "... the dearth of houses suitable for the needs of large families able to pay only a small rent". In a further reference to this problem he made the following comment :—"It has been very difficult to deal with most of these cases, because alternative accommodation is non-existent, nor is it likely that a satisfactory solution can be found until the supply of houses approximates more nearly to the demand". It is tragic that these words written thirty one years ago, are still descriptive of the conditions of today. Only too often inability to pay a high rent means delay in obtaining suitable

accommodation, with the detrimental effects upon health of continued existence in unsatisfactory premises. Alternatively, in border line cases, money for the rent can be produced only by going short of other necessities of life such as food and clothing, or by the mother of young children going out to work.

THE NEW ESTATE.—The bold conception of the plan of the Mildenhall Road Estate, and the rapid progress which has been made, are achievements of which the people of this Borough are justly proud.

HARDWICK CAMP.—Some of the tenants have improved and adapted their Nissen type huts and are making the very best use of the limited facilities available, unfortunately others have not done so.

Towards the end of the year complaints were received of condensation occurring on the insides of many huts. Advice was given to tenants concerning the importance of adequate ventilation, and cork paint preparations were tried in an attempt to reduce this problem.

The huts on this camp have served a useful purpose at a time of great need. They provided shelter from the elements and a separate home for many families, who would otherwise have had to share a home, but there is no doubt that the amenities provided fall far short of desirable modern standards.

SUB-STANDARD TENANTS are few in number, but some are very resistant to our efforts to improve their conditions of living. Such families are visited periodically by members of this department, and in this connection much work is performed in close co-operation with the County Health Visiting staff and with the appropriate Voluntary Societies.

SUB-STANDARD HOUSES.—Houses exist in several parts of the Borough, which by reason of obsolete design, deterioration, and lack of the necessary amenities, are not up to standard. The time is approaching when some of these premises should be closed or demolished. But, on account of the acute housing shortage, the problem can only be tackled on a small scale at the present time.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT, 1947.

The preliminary draft of the Factual Survey and Outline Plan for the Borough, prepared by the County Planning Officer, was submitted to the Council in November. The document, modified in the light of the observations of the Borough Council, will be published in due course and undoubtedly will provide much material of interest to local residents. Many of the matters discussed in this report may have an important bearing on the state of the public health in years to come.

It is to be expected that controlled development and redevelopment, taking place gradually but within the framework of an overall plan, will produce results which cannot be achieved in any other way.

CAUSES OF DEATHS DURING THE YEAR 1950
IN BURY ST. EDMUNDS.

			Registrar General's Figures.	
			M.	F.
	ALL CAUSES	....	119	109
1	Tuberculosis, respiratory	....	3	1
2	Tuberculosis, other	....	—	1
3	Syphilitic disease	....	—	—
4	Diphtheria	....	—	—
5	Whooping Cough	....	—	—
6	Meningococcal infections	....	—	—
7	Acute poliomyelitis	....	—	1
8	Measles	....	—	—
9	Other infective and parasitic diseases	....	—	—
10	Malignant neoplasm, stomach	....	4	1
11	Malignant neoplasm, lung, bronchus	....	1	—
12	Malignant neoplasm, breast	....	—	2
13	Malignant neoplasm, uterus	....	—	1
14	Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	....	14	10
15	Leukaemia, aleukaemia	....	2	—
16	Diabetes	....	2	2
17	Vascular lesions of nervous system	....	20	26
18	Coronary disease, angina	....	21	12
19	Hypertension with heart disease	....	2	7
20	Other heart disease	....	19	20
21	Other circulatory disease	....	3	4
22	Influenza	....	1	—
23	Pneumonia	....	1	8
24	Bronchitis	....	3	2
25	Other diseases of respiratory system	....	—	—
26	Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	....	1	—
27	Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhoea	....	—	2
28	Nephritis and nephrosis	....	3	—
29	Hyperplasia of prostate	....	2	—
30	Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion	....	—	1
31	Congenital malformations	....	3	1
32	Other defined and ill-defined diseases	....	11	7
33	Motor vehicle accidents	....	1	—
34	All other accidents	....	—	—
35	Suicide	....	2	—
36	Homicide and operations of war	....	—	—

